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CITY OF MANCHESTER
ART GALLERY

RICHARD WILSON
LOAN EXHIBITION

October 22 to December 5, 1925

LIBRARY

77. 10. 1925

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The Art Gallery Committee desire to express their gratitude to all those who have generously lent works to the Exhibition

PREFACE

TWO recent exhibitions of Richard Wilson's works, the one at Bangor in the spring, the other at the Tate Gallery in the summer, provided an opportunity of giving a further survey of his output to the public in Manchester, where a group of his paintings has for long been a distinguishing feature of the collection in the City Art Gallery.

Thanks to the generosity of various corporate bodies and private individuals, a number of the most interesting pictures in these two exhibitions have been lent to Manchester and have been supplemented by a few others; the general aim in selecting the works being to show not merely Wilson's Classical Italian landscapes, which are to be found in most public collections, but also the rather less familiar views of England and Wales, together with some representative examples of his portraits and a group of drawings in water colour, crayon and pencil, which even students of the English School have seldom had a chance of seeing.

Richard Wilson, the third son of a clergyman, was born in 1714 at Penygoes, near Machnylleth, Montgomeryshire, and at the age of fifteen was apprenticed to an obscure painter, Thomas Wright, in London. When he reached the capital, Hogarth had just painted his well-known portrait of Lavinia Fenton as Polly Peachum, Reynolds was six years old, and Gainsborough a child of two. What happened to Wilson during the next twenty years is mainly a matter of conjecture. It used to be supposed that he confined himself to portraits in the manner of Thomas Hudson and Jonathan Richardson, Hudson's father-in-law, until his visit to Italy in 1749. Admirable portraits of this pre-Italian period are in existence (No. 57 in this Exhibition is an example) and recent research

(which the inaccessibility of some of the painter's most interesting works has not facilitated) goes to show that he also produced landscapes at this time and that he had already gained a reputation amongst patrons of art as a landscape painter.

In 1749 Wilson set out on an Italian tour, arriving first in Venice, where Tiepolo, Guardi (only two years his senior) and Zuccarelli were all at work; Canaletto at that moment being in England. The legend that it was Zuccarelli who first encouraged the young Englishman to take up landscape painting and influenced his style is obviously apocryphal. Wilson's style never was appreciably affected by that of this obscure and second-rate painter. On the other hand his painting shows that he was clearly influenced by Cuyp, Claude, Guardi, Canaletto and Nicholas Poussin. From Venice he went to Rome where he painted in company with Reynolds and had numerous pupils. He went later to Naples and eventually returned to England in 1756, when he continued from time to time to paint portraits (see Nos. 16 and 31).

Through Paul Sandby he was introduced to the Duke of Cumberland and so obtained Court patronage, and when the Royal Academy was founded in 1768 Wilson was made one of the Foundation Members. At first he prospered but gradually his sales diminished except in the direction of his Italian landscapes of which, owing to their popularity, he made several replicas (see Nos. 14, 37 and 63 in this Exhibition). His appointment to the post of Librarian to the Royal Academy, though it may have brought him distinction, carried with it a purely nominal salary.

A few years later when attempting to sell a View of Sion House to George III., the painter suggested that if His Majesty found the price of sixty guineas too much for him he should pay it in instalments. This display of tact seems to have been characteristic and with his diminishing sales helped to hasten the period of poverty in which

his later years was spent. He moved from one wretched lodging to another, living largely on bread and porter (more porter it seems than bread); he was cut by most of his brother-academicians who had not been reduced, as he had been, to sending their paints and brushes along with the furniture to the pawnbrokers; and eventually he crept out of London to seek refuge in Llanberis where he died in 1782 in his 68th year.

"Poor Wilson" said Constable, "think of his fate; think of his magnificence." The magnificence to which Constable referred has not perhaps been sufficiently appreciated by critics and historians of art. As a portrait painter it may be said that he could at least hold his own in the distinguished company of the 18th century portrait school. His reputation in this direction would be sufficiently established if he had never painted anything beyond the portrait of J. H. Mortimer, which, besides possessing high æsthetic qualities, is interesting historically, for it was painted in 1760, and is therefore contemporary with Gainsborough's Bath portraits and antedates the open-air portraits by that Master and by Reynolds.

As a landscape painter Wilson may not have had the same marked influence on Continental painting as Turner and Constable and his reputation abroad is consequently less high than it otherwise would be. It is at least worth noticing that such foreign writers on landscape painting as are well acquainted with his works are fully alive to the justice of his claim to be the Father of British Landscape Painting.

Turner and Crome actually copied Wilson, and like Constable were influenced by his painting (a striking example of his influence on Turner may be seen in the landscape No. 37a lent by Mr. G. B. Blair). Other contemporaries such as George Lambert, Paul Sandby and Farington, also showed his influence. It is possible again

to trace him in Corot's earlier work, and in his boldness in the organization of pictorial design he foreshadows one of the modern schools of landscape painting. The presence of this strong pictorial sense in a faithful student of nature is one reason why so many later landscape painters have been able to claim their spiritual descent from Wilson. How admirably the two strains in him could be held in harmonious balance may be seen by looking at such paintings as Mr. Marsh's "Summit of Cader Idris" and the "Snowdon," in the possession of the City of Nottingham, which has been rightly described as being almost Chinese in the treatment of the shapes of the hills.

The Ford Collection of Wilson's works, from which so many pictures in the present Exhibition are lent, was originally made by Mr. Benjamin Booth, who was a friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds. His daughter, Marianne, married Sir Richard Ford, a member of an old Sussex family and M.P. for East Grinstead in 1789, and the collection eventually passed to her son, Richard Ford, the author of the "Handbook for Travellers in Spain," and from him to his son, Sir Francis Clare Ford (1830-1899), Ambassador to Spain, the father of the present owner, Captain Richard Ford.

Amongst the books dealing with Richard Wilson are his Life by Thomas Wright published in 1824; Mr. Beaumont Fletcher's monograph (in the Makers of British Art Series, edited by Mr. J. A. Manson) published in 1908; a more recent monograph by Mr. Frank Rutter (in the British Artists Series, edited by Mr. Kaines Smith) published in 1923; and Colonel M. H. Grant's two volumes of Old English Landscape Painters which is in the press.

LAWRENCE HAWARD

CATALOGUE

Room 9

1 Tivoli
Chalk 10¼ by 16 in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

2 View from the Palatine Hill
Pencil 5⅜ by 8½ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

3 Landscape Sketch
Red Chalk 3¾ by 6 in.
Lent by Edward Marsh, Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

4 View near London
Red Chalk 7¼ by 11⅝ in.
Lent by the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

5 Circus of Carcalla
Chalk 11 by 16¼ in. Signed R.W.
Lent by Sir Robert Witt, C.B.E.

6 View of Croome (Lord Coventry's Seat)
Chalk 12¾ by 9⅛ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

7 Two Landscapes on one sheet
Pencil and sepia 3½ in. and 3¾ in. diameter
Lent by Sir Robert Witt, C.B.E.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM LIBRARY

8 View in Rome
Pencil 10⅛ by 15½ in.
Lent by Sir Robert Witt, C.B.E.

9 Castle and River
Chalk and sepia 10½ by 15½ in.
Lent by Edward Marsh, Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

10 Trees and Houses
Chalk 8½ by 7¼ in.
Lent by Sir Robert Witt, C.B.E.

11 View near Rome
Water Colour 15½ by 21 in. Signed R.W. 1760
Lent by the Corporation of Nottingham

12 The Grove
Oil 17 by 21 in.
Lent by Colonel M. H. Grant

13 Pembroke Castle
Oil 23 by 34 in.
The property of the Corporation of Manchester

14 On the Strada Nomentana
Oil 17 by 21½ in. Compare No. 21
The property of the Corporation of Manchester

15 Italian Landscape: The White Monk
Oil Smaller version of Nos. 63 and 65
Signed R.W.
Lent by F. A. White, Esq.

16 Portrait of the Artist
Oil 25 by 22 in. Signed R.W.
Lent by the President and Council of the Royal Academy of Arts

17 De Tabley House
Oil
Lent by A. T. Hollingsworth, Esq.

18 Italian Landscape
Oil 15¼ by 21½ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

19 Pozzuoli from across the Bay of Baiae
Oil 17 by 27 in.
The property of the Corporation of Manchester

20 Italian Landscape
Oil 26 in. diameter
The property of the Corporation of Manchester

21 On the Strada Nomentana
Oil 17 by 13½ in. Compare No. 14
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

22 Evening
Oil 11¾ by 10¼ in.
Lent by G. W. Haswell, Esq., F.S.A.

23 Sion House
Oil 13½ by 16½ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

24 Old Water Mill: Cader Idris in the background
Oil 9⅜ by 12½ in.
Lent by J. Lees Bilbie, Esq.

25 Welsh Landscape
Oil 12 by 14 in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

26 Vale of Narni
Oil 26 by 19¾ in. Signed R.W.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

27 On the Tiber
Oil 10½ by 13½ in.
Lent by Sir Hickman Bacon, Bart.

28 Fishing Scene
Oil 13½ by 17 in
Lent by H. Bendixson, Esq.

29 The Convent Della Victoria, Aventine, Rome
Oil 13½ by 16½ in.
Lent by Sir Charles Holmes

30 Villa Borghese

Oil 19 by 28¾ in.

Lent by Captain Richard Ford

31 John Hamilton Mortimer, A.R.A.

Oil 30 by 25 in. c.1761

Lent by the President and Council of the Royal Academy of Arts

32 Lake with children in foreground

Oil 19 by 29 in.

Lent by Sir Hickman Bacon, Bart.

33 Richard Wilson, R.A.

Engraved by William Bond from a portrait copied by John Taylor under the inspection of Wilson, after an original picture by Raphael Mengs

Lent by F. A. White. Esq.

34 Italian Lake Scene

From the Huth Collection

Oil 16½ by 20½ in. Signed R.W. 1764

Lent by Frederick Seymour Clarke, Esq.

35 Summit of Cader Idris

Oil 20 by 28¾ in.

Lent by Edward Marsh, Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

36 View of Rome

Oil 17 by 21 in.

Lent by Colonel M. H. Grant

37 Lake of Nemi

Oil 27½ by 52 in. Compare No. 55
Lent by George Leon, Esq.

37a Kilgarran Castle

By J. M. W. Turner, R.A.
Oil 23 by 28 in.
Lent by G. B. Blair, Esq.

38 Landscape with Quarry

Oil 16¼ by 20½ in.
Lent by the National Gallery, Millbank

39 Landscape with figures

Oil 24 by 29 in. Signed R. Wilson
Lent by Sir Robert C. Witt, C.B.E.

40 Hounslow Heath

Oil 16¼ by 20¾ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

41 Study of a Flask

From the Warwick Collection
Pencil 10½ by 9½ in. Signed R.W.
Lent by Edward Marsh Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

42 Bridge over the Anio

Pencil 8 by 11⅛ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

43 Bay of Baiae

Chalk 5¾ in. diameter

Lent by Sir Robert C. Witt, C.B.E.

44 Copenhagen House, Islington Fields

One of Wilson's extremely rare water colours

6 by 10¼ in. c.1780

Lent by Edward Marsh, Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

45 A City by a River

Pencil 10⅜ by 15⅞ in.

Lent by Sir Robert C. Witt, C.B.E.

46 Richard Wilson Sketching Raphael's Villa

Pencil 7½ by 10 in.

Lent by Captain Richard Ford

47 Landscape Composition

Brush and chalk 6¾ by 5½ in. Signed R.W. 1754

Lent by Edward Marsh, Esq., C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.

48 Tivoli

Chalk 9⅛ by 14½ in.

Lent by Captain Richard Ford

49 Tower by the Sea

Chalk and Sepia 6½ by 10¼ in.

Lent by Colonel M. H. Grant

Room 8

50 View of Dover
Oil 35 by 46 in.
Lent by L. A. Harrison, Esq.

50a Photograph of Engraving by J. S. Müller after Wilson
Compare No. 50

51 View of Rome from Monte Mario
Oil 39 by 53 in.
Lent by Sir Herbert Cook, Bart.

52 A Welsh Valley
Oil 35½ by 41½ in.
The property of the Corporation of Manchester

53 Classical Landscape
Oil 30 by 38 in.
Lent by the Rev. W. T. Saward

54 Evening Sunset
Oil 24½ by 33¼ in.
Lent by The Rev. W. T. Saward

55 Diana and the Nymphs
From the Northwick Collection
Oil 40 by 53 in. Signed R.W. Compare No. 37
Lent by The Lady Lever Art Gallery

56 View of Tivoli

Oil 48 by 66 in. Signed R.W.

Lent by The Lady Lever Art Gallery

57 Portrait of Admiral Thomas Smith

Oil 50 by 40¼ in. c.1747

Lent by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty

58 Landscape with Ruins

Oil 66 by 64 in.

The property of the Corporation of Manchester

59 Portrait of a Gentleman

Oil 50¾ by 40 in. Signed R. Wilson f.1750

Lent by the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

60 The Destruction of Niobe's Children

Oil 46 by 66 in.

Lent by the National Gallery, Millbank

61 Cicero's Villa

Oil 40 by 54 in.

The property of the Corporation of Manchester

62 The Thames at Twickenham

Oil 23½ by 35½ in.

Lent by Captain Richard Ford

63 Italian Landscape: The White Monk
Oil 26 by 30½ in. Signed R.W. Compare No. 65
Lent by The Lady Lever Art Gallery

64 Tiber
Oil 39 by 54 in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

65 Italian Landscape: The White Monk
Oil 27 by 32½ in. Signed R.W. Compare No. 63
Lent by F. A. White, Esq.

66 The Convent: Twilight
Oil 24 by 37 in.
Lent by the Corporation of Glasgow

67 Lake Scene, Castle Gandolfo
Oil 29 by 38½ in. Signed R.W.
Lent by The Lady Lever Art Gallery

68 Snowdon
Oil 40½ by 49 in.
Lent by the Corporation of Nottingham

69 Italian Scene
Oil 30 by 39½ in.
Lent by Captain Richard Ford

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